

ONEVAASĀ EXCURSIONS

Achanakmar Tiger Reserve

An Eight-Day Outdoor Learning Program

14 – 21 July 2026

Newton School of Technology · 20–24 students

PROGRAM AGENDA

Prepared by the onevaasā Programs Office

Program at a Glance

Achanakmar Tiger Reserve is one of central India's most ecologically rich Sal-and-bamboo landscapes, a part of the Achanakmar–Amarkantak Biosphere Reserve and the Bilaspur–Mungeli district complex of Chhattisgarh. It anchors a corridor that connects to the Kanha and Bandhavgarh landscapes, and it is home to Baiga and Gond communities whose lifeways have shaped these forests for generations.

This eight-day residential program is designed for a cohort of twenty to twenty-four undergraduate students from Newton School of Technology. It combines slow forest immersion, structured field labs, community time, government interaction, and storytelling practice. The intent is not to deliver a curriculum at students, but to put them inside a working landscape and give them tools to read, interpret, and respond to it.

Because the program runs in monsoon, the design uses buffer-zone forests, riparian habitats and community spaces extensively. Core-area movement is undertaken only with explicit Forest Department permits and in formats appropriate to the season.

Cohort & format

Participants 20–24 undergraduate students, Newton School of Technology

Duration 8 days · 7 nights — arrival 14 Jul, departure 21 Jul 2026

Base camp Buffer-zone field station, Achanakmar Tiger Reserve, Chhattisgarh

Travel hubs Raipur (air & rail) and Bilaspur (rail) — chartered pick-up and drop arranged from both

Mentors 1 Program Lead · 1 Senior Naturalist · 1 Documentary Filmmaker (storytelling & documentary workshops) · 1 Community Engagement Facilitator · visiting Forest Dept. resource persons

Ratio ~1 mentor : 6 students for field activities

Eight Days at a Glance

A high-level view of the program. Each day is detailed on the pages that follow.

Day	Date	Theme	Anchor Activities
1	Mon, 14 Jul	Arrival & Welcome	Pick-up from Raipur & Bilaspur · base-camp orientation · welcome circle · first night sounds walk
2	Tue, 15 Jul	Natural History of Indian Forests	Dawn-chorus walk · forest typology · botanical exercise · buffer trail · journaling intro
3	Wed, 16 Jul	Tiger Landscape Conservation	Buffer safari · Project Tiger module · camera traps & pugmark casting · documentary screening
4	Thu, 17 Jul	Wildlife Tracking & Birding	Pre-dawn birding · field tracking lab · habitat-based birding · eBird logging · pictures-of-the-day
5	Fri, 18 Jul	Community Engagement	Baiga–Gond village immersion · elders' circle · cooking with women's collective · JFMC visit
6	Sat, 19 Jul	Government & Illegal Wildlife Trade	Field Director interaction · anti-poaching camp · IWT workshop · researcher conversation
7	Sun, 20 Jul	Leadership & Storytelling	Student-led tracking walk · leadership lab · documenting & storytelling · open-mic projection
8	Mon, 21 Jul	Reflection & Departure	Final dawn walk · closing circle · certificates · transfers back to Bilaspur / Raipur

DAY 1 Monday, 14 July**Arrival & Welcome**

The cohort gathers from Raipur and Bilaspur and arrives at base camp. The day is gentle by design — pace, orient, settle.

Time	Session	Lead
By 13:00	Group rendezvous at Raipur (air & rail) and Bilaspur (rail); chartered van transfers to base camp (~4 hours from Raipur, ~2 hours from Bilaspur)	Logistics
By 17:00	Arrival at base camp; welcome chai · room allotment · base-camp walk-through · health & safety briefing	Program Lead
18:00	Opening circle: who we are, why we're here, what we leave behind in the forest	Program Lead
19:30	Dinner around the fire	—
20:30	First night sounds walk — short loop around camp; introduction to listening	Naturalist
21:30	Lights down	—

Mentor notes

- Confirm participant medical forms, allergies and dietary needs are received before departure from campus.
- Pick-up coordinators are at Raipur airport and Bilaspur station from the morning. Two separate convoys converge at the base camp.
- Assign field buddies (pairs) on arrival. Buddies stay together on every walk and safari.
- Run a quick rain/leech protocol demo at the welcome circle so it is not a surprise on Day 2.

DAY 2 Tuesday, 15 July**Natural History of Indian Forests***The first full day in the forest. We learn to read what we are walking through — typology, species, processes.*

Time	Session	Lead
05:30	Tea + dawn-chorus walk: introduction to bird calls in monsoon Sal forest	Naturalist
07:30	Breakfast	—
08:30	Module 1 · Reading the Indian Forest — forest typology (Champion & Seth in plain English), why central Indian Sal matters, ATR in context	Naturalist
10:30	Botanical exercise: keying out Sal, Tendu, Mahua, Saja, Bamboo and the monsoon understorey	Naturalist
12:30	Lunch + rest (the afternoon storm window)	—
15:30	Buffer-zone trail walk: applying the morning's framework to a single transect	Naturalist
17:30	Field-craft workshop: using a journal and a camera as field tools	Filmmaker
18:30	Reflection circle + journaling intro — students get their field journals	Program Lead
19:30	Dinner; optional star-and-cloud session if skies clear	—

Mentor notes

- Carry plant press materials. Ten students rotate as the day's collectors.
- Reinforce the no-collection ethic for any species inside reserve boundaries. Specimens are photographed, not picked.
- Filmmaker introduces the through-the-week documentary brief on Day 2 — sets up Day 7's outputs.

DAY 3 Wednesday, 16 July**Tiger Landscape Conservation**

A buffer safari opens the day. Afterwards, we step back: how a single tiger needs a hundred square kilometres, and how India built the architecture to protect it.

Time	Session	Lead
05:00	Tea	—
05:30	Buffer-zone safari (3 jeeps · 7 students each · 1 mentor + 1 Forest Dept. guide per jeep)	Naturalist · Forest Dept.
09:00	Breakfast back at camp	—
10:30	Module 2 · Project Tiger and the Landscape Approach — 1973 to today, ATR's 2009 declaration, corridors to Kanha and Bandhavgarh, the biosphere logic	Naturalist
12:30	Lunch	—
15:00	Field lab: camera trap deployment, downloading, software walkthrough; pugmark casting in plaster	Naturalist
17:30	Walk to a salt lick / waterhole; quiet observation	Naturalist
19:30	Dinner	—
20:30	Documentary screening + discussion (selected India title)	Filmmaker

Mentor notes

- Confirm safari permits for buffer entry are issued in writing by the Range office at least 72 hours prior.
- Brief students on safari conduct (silence, no flash, no leaning, hands inside) before the engines start.
- Camera-trap units stay deployed through Day 7; a student team is assigned to monitor downloads.

DAY 4 Thursday, 17 July**Wildlife Tracking & Birding***The grammar of presence. What the forest leaves behind, and how to make a sober inference from it.*

Time	Session	Lead
05:00	Pre-dawn birding workshop: optics, field guides, eBird app setup	Naturalist
07:30	Breakfast	—
08:30	Module 3 · Reading the Forest Floor — tracks, scat, scrapes, kills, alarm calls	Naturalist
10:30	Tracking lab: four groups of 5–6 working different transects; one mentor with each group shadowing decisions	Naturalist · Filmmaker
12:30	Lunch	—
15:30	Habitat-based birding: riparian vs. canopy vs. clearing — students rotate stations	Naturalist
18:00	Bird log session: building the cohort's shared eBird checklist	Naturalist
19:30	Dinner	—
20:30	"Pictures of the day" projection — short cuts from the cohort's footage	Filmmaker

Mentor notes

- Each tracking group submits one find for plenary the next morning — forces students to argue from evidence.
- Keep the pace gentle in the afternoon birding rotation; students will be tiring by mid-program.
- The filmmaker collects raw rushes from students' phones / cameras at lunch; rough cuts ready by dinner.

DAY 5 Friday, 18 July**Community Engagement**

The day that asks the most. We are guests in a working community whose lives have shaped the forest for generations.

Time	Session	Lead
06:30	Drive (~45 min) to a Baiga / Gond village in or adjacent to the buffer	Community Facilitator
08:00	Welcome by the village panchayat; introductions with the headman	Community Facilitator
09:00	Walk through the village: traditional houses, kitchens, granaries, sacred groves	Village hosts
10:30	Conversation circle with elders — oral histories, forest dependence, generational change	Community Facilitator
12:00	Cooking with the women's collective: foraged greens, mahua-based dishes, local millets	Women's collective
13:30	Community lunch — eat with hosts, not separately	—
15:00	Conversation with younger residents — aspirations, education, livelihood programs	Community Facilitator
16:30	Visit to the Joint Forest Management Committee — what co-management actually looks like	JFMC chair
18:00	Return to camp	—
20:00	Long reflection circle (this is the day that needs the most processing)	Program Lead

Mentor notes

- No filming or photographing community members without explicit, named consent — reinforce in the morning brief.
- Compensation, gifts and contributions are coordinated through the community facilitator only; students do not hand cash.
- Honoraria and a contribution to the village development fund are pre-arranged; communicated transparently to students.

DAY 6 Saturday, 19 July**Government & Illegal Wildlife Trade***A morning with the people who run the reserve. An afternoon on the trade that threatens it.*

Time	Session	Lead
06:00	Drive to ATR Field Director's office / nearest Range office	Logistics
08:00	Breakfast en route	—
09:30	Interaction with the Field Director / DFO — the management plan, working with people, what is hard right now	Field Director
11:00	Visit to an anti-poaching camp; meet frontline staff; observe the routine	Range Officer
13:00	Lunch with Forest Dept. staff	—
15:00	Module 4 · Illegal Wildlife Trade & Trafficking — pangolin scales, tiger parts, freshwater turtle and bird trade; how WCCB, TRAFFIC and WPSI work	Naturalist · Guest
17:00	Conversation with a researcher or activist (in person or remote) on the policy edge of IWT	Guest speaker
19:00	Return to camp	—
20:00	Debrief dinner — what we heard, what we want to ask back	—

Mentor notes

- Lock the Field Director's slot 21+ days in advance through the program's government liaison.
- Brief the guest speaker on cohort level — these are technology students, not conservation majors. Keep examples concrete.

DAY 7 Sunday, 20 July**Leadership & Storytelling***The week's work crystallises. Students lead, document, and tell a story of place.*

Time	Session	Lead
05:30	Final tracking walk — student-led in pairs, mentor shadowing from behind	Students · Naturalist
08:00	Breakfast	—
09:00	Module 5 · Leadership in Conservation — facilitation, team dynamics, ethics in the field; team exercise: design a response to a real ATR challenge	Program Lead
12:30	Lunch	—
14:00	Module 6 · Documenting & Storytelling — photography fundamentals, ethics of wildlife imagery, interview craft, writing as field practice	Filmmaker
16:00	Field documentation exercise: pairs go out for 90 minutes to capture one "story of place" — photo + 200 words OR a 60-second voice memo	Filmmaker
18:30	Storytelling open mic / projection night around the fire	Filmmaker · Program Lead
20:30	Closing dinner	—

Mentor notes

- The leadership exercise should hand students a real ATR challenge (e.g., human–leopard conflict in a buffer village) — not a hypothetical case.
- For the projection night, set the screen up before dusk; 24 students and rain do not mix with last-minute setup.
- Filmmaker assembles a short 3-minute cohort highlight by morning of Day 8 — to be played at the closing circle.

DAY 8 Monday, 21 July*A short final morning. A long, slow goodbye to the place.***Reflection & Departure**

Time	Session	Lead
05:30	Optional final dawn walk — quiet, no agenda	Naturalist
07:00	Breakfast	—
08:30	Closing circle: highlight reel, personal commitments, group reflection, certificates of completion	Program Lead
10:00	Pack up; sign-off on shared materials (camera traps, journals, plant press)	—
11:00	Depart for Bilaspur and Raipur in separate convoys	Logistics
By 14:00	Drop at Bilaspur railway station	Logistics
By 16:00	Drop at Raipur airport / railway station	Logistics

Mentor notes

- Collect a one-page written reflection from every student before the closing circle — raw material for the program's impact report.
- Confirm onward train and flight timings the previous evening; build in a 90-minute buffer at each hub.

Logistics & Operations

Travel & transfers

- Group pick-ups at Raipur airport / railway station and Bilaspur railway station on 14 July, in convoys appropriate to arrival timings.
- Three chartered Tempo Travellers (or two mini-coaches) per convoy for transfers and all in-program movement.
- A separate medical / contingency vehicle stays on standby at base camp every day the cohort is in the field.
- Return drops at both Bilaspur (by 14:00) and Raipur (by 16:00) on 21 July, in two separate convoys.

Accommodation & food

- Twin-share rooms at the buffer-zone field station; common shared bathrooms by block. Single-room accommodations for mentors.
- Three full meals plus two tea breaks daily. Vegetarian by default; Jain, vegan, non-vegetarian and allergy needs collected pre-departure and confirmed with the kitchen.
- Drinking water filtered on site; reusable bottles issued on Day 1 — no single-use plastic on program.

Permits & paperwork

- Educational-program permit applied to the ATR Field Director at least 30 days in advance; copies carried in every vehicle.
- Buffer-zone safari permits secured in writing 72 hours before the safari day.
- Community-visit consent signed by the village headman / panchayat; honoraria pre-arranged with the community facilitator.
- Student medical declaration, parental consent (for under-18s), and group travel insurance — all collated before departure from campus.

Health, safety & risk

- On-call doctor in Bilaspur; first-aid kit at camp and one in every vehicle; trained first-aiders on staff (minimum two mentors per day).
- Leech protocol, monsoon clothing kit and daily rain plan B briefed on Day 1 and revisited every morning.
- No solo movement outside camp at any time. The buddy system is non-negotiable.
- Mobile network is patchy; satellite messenger carried by the program lead. Daily check-in window with the onevaasā office at 20:00 IST.
- Wildlife rules: no flash, no calling, no leaving vehicles inside the reserve, no off-trail walking.

Materials carried by the program team

- Field optics kit: 8 binoculars, 1 spotting scope, 4 head-torches per cohort.

- Field labs: camera-trap units (4), pugmark casting kit, plant press, hand-lenses, hygrometer/thermometer.
- Documentation kit: 1 DSLR + lenses, 2 voice recorders, 24 student field journals, pens, weather covers.
- Resource library: Indian forest typology, ATR management plan summary, IWT case files, region-specific field guides.

Mentor roles

- Program Lead — overall pacing, risk, and the daily reflection circle.
- Senior Naturalist — modules on forest typology, tiger landscape, IWT; safaris and field labs.
- Documentary Filmmaker — Day 7 storytelling and documentary workshops; rushes through the week; closing-day highlight reel.
- Community Engagement Facilitator — village day, ethics brief, JFMC interaction.
- Logistics & Operations Coordinator — transfers, kitchen, permits, comms.

Contingency triggers

- Heavy rain making safari unsafe → swap to a covered buffer trail and an extended classroom module; safari rescheduled to the next morning slot.
- Field Director unavailable on Day 6 → fall back to a Range Officer + remote dial-in with a reserve management researcher.
- Village visit cancelled at short notice → spend the day at a JFMC-managed buffer hamlet with prior contingency consent.
- Medical evacuation needed → standby vehicle to Bilaspur (~2 hours), pre-identified hospital, program lead accompanies the student until guardian / handover.